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The car has come a long way over the years, from its humble beginnings as a steam powered vehicle to its modern equivalent born out of the discovery of the internal combustion engine. But whilst people around the world rely on their cars to carry out daily tasks the pioneers of the automobile are rarely considered, despite their massive contributions. Whether itâ€™s Karl Benz or lesser known names like Frederick W. Lanchester, they have had a profound influence on the way in which you live your life. But who are these people and how have they shaped the car?

There are many names that we associate with early cars but it is often Karl Benz that comes to mind when discussing one of the very first. Whilst previous cars had existed prior to Benzâ€™s involvement these had been powered by steam and it was only when other inventors â€“ such as the equally as famous Willhelm Maybach - began to experiment with the internal combustion engine that he was able to make his influence. From this he was able to implement a gasoline fuelled engine, which is still found in cars today, ensuring his legacy.

But Benz and Mayback are not alone. The car is made up of many different components and it took other great minds to realise them. Frederick W. Lanchester is one such example; he is responsible for a wide range of successes related to the automobile (including improving the petrol engine) but among enthusiasts and historians he is also noted as the man responsible for bringing us the disc brake in the late 19th century. Likewise, the name associated with the steering wheel is a racer named Alfred Vacheron who utilised it in the 1890s.

So it shows that early pioneers have produced many of the items we still use today, with these smaller parts still found when shopping for car parts online. These items are so common-place today that it is hard to imagine, for example, that drivers once used a device known as a â€˜tiltâ€™ to steer their vehicle.

Looking at the world today you only have to see what ideas are still in use to understand how these great minds coalesced into the modern cars that are taken for granted. Some of these inventors were operating in the 19th century, but many more people have added to the designs over the years and there will undoubtedly be many more waiting to get their ideas out there in the future.

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